

Application of the Framework of Reference for Intercultural Competence Teaching in China's Foreign Language Education in Senior High School English Reading Instruction: A Case Study

Chen Zhongli¹, Peng Yi^{2*}

¹Graduate Student of QZ231 in the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, China

²Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, China

*Corresponding Author

Received: 30 May 2025; Received in revised form: 27 Jun 2025; Accepted: 30 Jun 2025; Published on: 04 Jul 2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by TheShillonga. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



Abstract

Cultivating intercultural competence is a critical objective in English language teaching. This paper explores the practical application and pedagogical reflections of integrating the Framework of Reference for Intercultural Competence Teaching into senior high school English reading instruction. By employing backward design aligned with the framework, the study aims to foster students' deep comprehension of texts, enhance their intercultural awareness, cultivate positive intercultural attitudes, and ultimately develop their intercultural competence.



Keywords— *English teaching, instructional design, intercultural communication competence, reading instruction.*

I. INTRODUCTION

With the accelerating trend of globalization, international exchanges have become increasingly frequent. As a global lingua franca, English serves as a vital tool for communication, facilitating the integration of science, technology, and cultural exchanges worldwide. Consequently, mastering English has become more crucial than ever. In response to this global shift, China's current English curriculum standards—the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) and the Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised 2020)—explicitly emphasize that “learning and using English helps students understand diverse cultures, compare cultural similarities and differences, and draw upon cultural strengths. This process fosters the development of intercultural communication awareness and competence”, “One of the core principles of English teaching is to guide students in learning, comprehending, and appreciating outstanding Chinese and foreign cultures, nurturing patriotism, reinforcing cultural

confidence, broadening international perspectives, enhancing global understanding, and progressively improving intercultural communication skills to form correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values.”

Over the past four decades, academia has conducted extensive research on defining Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) and developing assessment tools (Zhang & Yao, 2020). However, practical guidance for high school English teachers on implementing ICC instruction remains insufficient. Many educators lack experience in applying intercultural foreign language teaching principles in classrooms, particularly in designing and executing ICC-aligned activities based on textbooks. To address this gap, in 2022, scholar Zhang H. L. and her research team developed the Framework of Reference for Intercultural Competence Teaching in China's Foreign Language Education—a comprehensive framework spanning primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

This paper presents a case study of an English reading lesson centered on Chinese cultural themes, illustrating the practical application and pedagogical reflections of integrating the Framework of Reference for Intercultural Competence Teaching into senior high school English reading instruction.

II. INTERCULTURAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1 Intercultural Communication Competence

Byram (1997) defines intercultural communication competence as the ability of communicators to act as mediators between different linguistic and cultural groups, facilitating mutual understanding and coordination. Spitzberg (2000) describes ICC as the capacity to behave appropriately and effectively in specific communicative contexts. Bennett & Bennett (2004) characterize ICC as the ability to overcome ethnocentric tendencies, transform self-identity, integrate diverse cultural elements, and navigate cultural boundaries with ease. Scholars widely agree that ICC entails the capability to engage in appropriate and effective communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds in various interactional settings (Deardorff, 2006; Dai, 2018).

2.2 Dimensions of Intercultural Communication Competence

Byram (1997) proposed the ABC model of ICC from the perspective of language and culture teaching, which remains the most widely accepted and applied foundational framework to date.

Table 1.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Questionnaire

This study adapted Zhang and Wu's (2022) ICC teaching framework to design a questionnaire assessing knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to ICC. Each questionnaire contained 18 AI-generated items covering foreign cultural knowledge, Chinese cultural knowledge, general cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, national identity, global awareness, intercultural experiences, intercultural dialogue, and intercultural exploration. The questionnaire served as an intercultural competence assessment tool, administered pre- and post-lesson to evaluate changes in students' ICC.

3.2 Interviews

Following the lesson, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with students based on a predefined

Affective Dimension: Refers to an individual's subjective willingness to understand, appreciate, and accept cultural differences.

Behavioral Dimension: Encompasses the ability to accomplish tasks and achieve communicative goals in intercultural interactions.

Cognitive Dimension: Involves the understanding of salient features in one's own culture and others' cultures.

2.3 Intercultural Foreign Language Teaching

Scholars widely agree that the overarching goal of intercultural foreign language teaching is learner-centered, integrating language and culture instruction naturally to cultivate learners' ICC. This requires aligning pedagogical approaches with the evaluative dimensions of ICC. According to the ABC model, cognitive development primarily relies on knowledge transmission, which can be acquired in the short term. In contrast, affective and behavioral dimensions necessitate cumulative practical experience.

China's current English curriculum standards present vague and ambiguous objectives for ICC teaching. This ambiguity leads many foreign language teachers to neglect ICC development in classrooms, undermining the educational value of intercultural instruction. To address these challenges, scholar Zhang H. L. developed the Framework of Reference for Intercultural Competence Teaching in China's Foreign Language Education, which provides clear guidelines across all educational stages. The specific requirements for senior high school are outlined in

interview outline. These interviews aimed to capture students' perceptions of intercultural competence instruction and provide deeper insights into their intercultural attitudes and skills.

3.3 Reflective Journals

Post-lesson, researchers maintained reflective journals documenting classroom observations, student challenges, and the feasibility of the framework.

IV. APPLICATION OF THE ICC FRAMEWORK IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH READING INSTRUCTION

4.1 Backward Design

Backward design, proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2003) as "Understanding by Design (UbD)", is a results-oriented instructional model. Wiggins and McTighe (2017) argue that teachers should define desired outcomes through four components: established goals, expected

understandings, essential questions, and acquired knowledge and skills. This approach enables teachers to create English learning activities that highlight Cultural

Awareness while assessing their implementation, perfectly aligning with the “teaching-learning-assessment integration” principle.

Table 1 Framework of Reference for ICC Teaching in China's Foreign Language Education (senior high school part)

Competence Dimensions		Senior High School Level
Knowledge	Foreign Cultural Knowledge	K-FCK-3 Basic understanding of the historical geography, sociocultural, political-economic, and literary-artistic knowledge of countries involved in the textbook and reading materials; comprehension of the cultural connotations of vocabulary, idioms, and allusions in the target language; in-depth knowledge of the lifestyles, communication styles, thinking patterns, and value systems of cultural groups covered in the textbook.
	Chinese Cultural Knowledge	K-CCK-3 Understand the historical timeline of China and its key events, representative figures, and classic literary and artistic works in each period; grasp the contemporary developments in Chinese society, politics, economy, and technological advancement; comprehend the communication styles and thinking patterns of diverse cultural groups in China, and gain a profound understanding of the core socialist values.
	General Cultural Knowledge	K-GCK-3 Deeply understand the connotation of culture and its interaction with language; grasp concepts such as stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and culture shock and their impact on intercultural communication; comprehend the notion of a global community of shared future and the shared cultural values of humanity.
Attitudes	Cultural Awareness	A-CA-3 Maintain a respectful and understanding attitude toward diverse cultures, appreciating cultural diversity; develop a strong sense of Chinese cultural identity through historical and cultural understanding; demonstrate willingness to interact and collaborate with people from different cultures, possessing basic empathy.
	National Identity	A-NI-3 Actively engage with contemporary China's role and challenges in global politics, economy, and technological development; enthusiastically use the target language to share Chinese narratives, reflecting cultural confidence.
	Global Mindedness	A-GM-3 Demonstrate enthusiasm for following global developments, understanding humanity's shared challenges, and enhancing international understanding and competitiveness through broadened knowledge of world cultures.
Skills	Intercultural Experiencing	S-IEr-3 Listen attentively to cultural narratives from others, observe carefully, and reflect actively to form informed understandings of different cultures; use the target language to describe and compare similarities and differences in cultural behaviors and thinking patterns among diverse cultural groups.
	Intercultural Dialogue	S-ID-3 Use the target language to narrate Chinese cultural stories and engage in in-depth exchanges of perspectives with individuals from different cultural backgrounds; when encountering misunderstandings or conflicts in intercultural communication, attempt to analyze and resolve issues from the perspective of cultural differences.
	Intercultural Dialogue	S-IEI-3 Independently seek and acquire information on cultural phenomena of interest, engaging in exploratory learning; through deep reflection on personal intercultural communication experiences and learning practices, grasp universal principles of intercultural communication and employ effective learning strategies.

A hallmark of backward design is its performance assessment tasks—authentic, challenging assignments

requiring students to apply knowledge comprehensively. These tasks provide real-world contexts where assessment

criteria are transparent to students, allowing their performance to serve as evaluative evidence. Additional evidence may include quizzes, exams, classroom observations, homework, and learning logs. After establishing assessment methods, teachers must also facilitate student self-reflection and self-assessment.

The following section demonstrates a sample lesson plan for a senior high school English class that emphasizes Cultural Awareness, using the reading text *The Chinese Writing System: Connecting the Past and the Present* from Unit 5 Reading & Thinking part of the Compulsory Volume 1 of the People's Education Press Senior High School English Textbook (full text in appendix).

4.2 Overall Introduction to this Unit

This unit centers on language development and language learning, covering topics such as the working languages of the United Nations, the development of Chinese characters, key differences between British and American English, challenges in English learning, and suggestions for overcoming these challenges. Students are expected to cultivate an international perspective while recognizing the importance of language learning from both national and personal development perspectives—specifically, the linguistic awareness required by the curriculum standards. They will explore the positive significance of Chinese characters in preserving and advancing Chinese culture, and engage in deep reflection on English learning strategies and methods.

This unit primarily involves the “History, Society, and Culture” theme group under the “People and Society” thematic context. Subtopics include ICC, tolerance and cooperation; tangible and intangible cultural heritage; social progress and human civilization; technological development and IT innovation; scientific spirit; and information security.

Under this theme group, the unit covers:

- Teaching British/American English pronunciation
- Theme-related vocabulary instruction
- Grammar teaching on relative adverbs in attributive clauses
- Development of discourse competence, learning skills, thinking quality, and cultural awareness

This unit's expressive skill objectives are:

1. Master communication techniques for requesting explanations
2. Express opinions on English learning methods in online communities

4.3 Teaching Materials

4.3.1 Teaching Materials Analysis

[What] The Chinese Writing System: Connecting the Past and the Present is an expository text about the development of Chinese characters, highlighting their historical role in connecting ancient and modern Chinese civilization. The text contains two main threads: The first is a chronological account of the writing system's evolution over thousands of years, serving as the explicit narrative line. The second is an implicit thread echoing the core concept “connecting” in the title, illustrating four key roles the writing system played in preserving Chinese civilization across millennia.

[How] This expository text is divided into six paragraphs, with its structure shown in *Error! Reference source not found.*

Linguistic Features:

Sentence Patterns: The text contains numerous modifiers in the form of relative clauses introduced by relative adverbs, laying the foundation for subsequent grammar learning.

Vocabulary: The text includes extensive dynasty-related terms.

Tense: Present tense is used when discussing the significance and functions of the Chinese writing system; past tense predominates when detailing its historical development.

[Why] Through this text, students will:

- Understand the developmental history of Chinese characters
- Explore their positive role in preserving Chinese civilization across millennia
- Reflect on the future evolution and functions of Chinese characters
- Genuinely experience the charm of Chinese characters
- Develop national identity
- Enhance cultural pride and cultural confidence

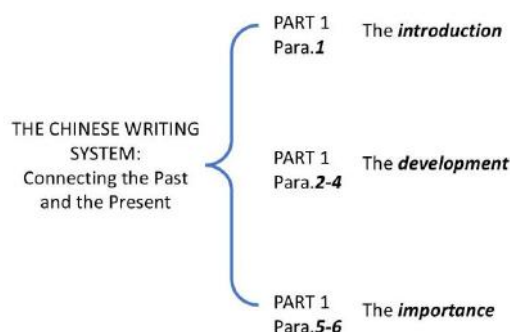


Fig. 1 The structure of chosen text

illustrates how this text aligns with the “ICC Teaching Reference Framework in Foreign Language Education (Senior High Section)” proposed by Zhang & Wu (2022):

The following

Table 2 how this text aligns with the “ICC Teaching Reference Framework in Foreign Language Education

Competence Dimensions		The Chinese Writing System
Knowledge	Foreign Cultural Knowledge	K-FCK-3 None
	Chinese Cultural Knowledge	K-CCK-3 The Formation and Evolution of Chinese Characters
	General Cultural Knowledge	K-GCK-3 The Chinese language connecting the world embodies the vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.
Attitudes	Cultural Awareness	A-CA-3 Based on understanding the history of Chinese characters’ development, forming stronger awareness of Chinese cultural identity.
	National Identity	A-NI-3 Pay attention to the roles and challenges of Chinese characters in global political and cultural development, promoting Chinese cultural confidence.
	Global Mindedness	A-GM-3 Pay attention to the development dynamics of Chinese characters in today’s world, enriching knowledge of world cultures.
Skills	Intercultural Experiencing	S-IEr-3 Listen attentively to cultural stories, observe carefully and think actively, forming cognitive understanding of cultures across time and space.
	Intercultural Dialogue	S-ID-3 Use English to tell the story of the development of Chinese characters.
	Intercultural Dialogue	S-IEI-3 Independently search for and acquire information on cultural phenomena of interest, conducting exploratory learning; basically master ICC principles and certain learning strategies.

Table 3 Teaching Objectives

Transfer (T)	
Students will be able to independently use their learning to:	
(1) Through exploring the relationship between Chinese characters and the inheritance of Chinese civilization, discover the unique charm of Chinese characters and strengthen confidence in learning language.	
(2) Enhance national pride	
Meaning (M)	
UNDERSTANDINGS (U)	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS (Q)
Students will understand that...	Students will keep considering...
(1) Key milestones and major events in the development of Chinese characters	(1) Characteristics distinguishing Chinese characters from other languages
(2) The significant impact of Chinese characters on China and the world	(2) Why connecting ancient/modern and Chinese/foreign aspects through Chinese characters matters
Acquisition of Knowledge & Skill (A)	
Students will know...	Students will be skilled at... (S)

(1) Key vocabulary for this lesson: <i>symbol, carve, character, dynasty...</i> (2) Grammar focus: Attributive clauses introduced by relative adverbs (3) Key milestones and events in the development of Chinese characters (4) Significance of Chinese characters and its manifestations	(1) Skill in scanning to extract key information
---	--

4.3.2 Student Profile

The students in this lesson are from a Grade 10 class at a high school in from a certain province in central China. The school has a strong academic atmosphere and robust teaching management. Cultivating ICC is also part of the district's research initiatives. This project will conduct teaching research using one class from this school as an example. The class has 60 students: 38 female and 22 males. Having studied English since Grade 3 (eight years total), they possess a solid language foundation.

To enhance their ICC, all students consented to participate in this lesson's research.

4.3.3 Teaching Objectives

Based on the unit's theme and instructional goals, the teacher will design lesson-specific objectives and implement rational lesson planning to facilitate students' achievement of intended learning outcomes, which are shown in *Table 3*.

Table 4 and Table 5.

Additional evidence requiring attention

Beyond performance tasks, attention should be paid to students' other performance aspects using multiple assessment methods to obtain evidence of teaching objective attainment. Other evidence in this case includes:

(1) Classroom performance: Students' level in extracting/paraphrasing key points, summarizing information with diagrams, inferring implicit meanings, interpreting themes, and applying expressions during activities, Q&A, and discussions;

(2) Peer evaluations and student self-assessments;

(3) Student performance in homework and in-class quizzes.

4.4 Teaching Procedures

Before class, students complete AI-designed ICC assessment questionnaire I for high school students. This serves as a reference for tracking changes in students' ICC.

Sample questions include:

Based on teaching objectives, the teacher needs to preset performance tasks. The key learning points and difficulties of this lesson involve organizing key milestones and events in Chinese character development, clarifying the significance of Chinese characters, practicing scanning skills, and strengthening cultural confidence and national pride. Aligned with the unit's expressive objectives, this lesson's performance task is designed as: "Role-play as historical record compilers to conduct a leaderless group discussion on 'Supporting the King of Qin's Character Unification Policy'."

By deconstructing knowledge and skills required for the performance task, the teacher designs corresponding instructional activities. The teacher needs to determine which assessment methods to use and what evidence to collect to demonstrate students' acquisition of expected understanding and achievement of learning objectives.

The evaluation dimensions for this performance task are designed as in

Knowledge:

In Chinese communicative culture, which behavior is generally considered polite?

- A. Directly rejecting invitations
- B. Speaking loudly in public
- C. Respecting elders and using appropriate language
- D. Disregarding privacy and being inquisitive about others' affairs

Attitudes:

When interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, which attitude best demonstrates respect and understanding?

- A. Believing your own culture is superior
- B. Showing curiosity and willingness to learn about others' customs
- C. Avoiding communication to prevent conflict
- D. Ignoring cultural differences and expecting universal behavior

Skills:

How can deeper cultural understanding be fostered when observing daily behaviors of different cultural groups?

- A. Focusing only on surface differences
- B. Directly comparing all customs to one's own culture
- C. Analyzing underlying cultural values through research and observation
- D. Avoiding engagement with unfamiliar cultural practices

4.4.1 Clarify Teaching Objectives

In Learning and Understanding: activities, the teacher initiates the perception and attention phase by having

students observe an oracle bone script image of “mountain”, guess its meaning to activate prior native language knowledge. Students are then guided to explore “how pictorial characters evolved into written scripts.” Subsequently, the lesson objectives are presented to clarify expected learning outcomes.

[Design Purpose]

Understand meaning: Characteristics distinguishing Chinese characters from other languages;

A-GM: Listen attentively to cultural stories, observe carefully and think actively, forming cognitive understanding of cultures across time and space.

Table 4 The evaluation dimensions for this performance task

Dimensions	Criteria	Corresponding Objectives
Content	Comprehensively and accurately present the timeline of Chinese characters' development; accurately assess the significance of their development	T1, T2 M: U1, U2, Q2 A: K1, K3, K4, S1,
Quality	Pronunciation accuracy, lexical and syntactic accuracy/variety, grammatical precision, clear and logical expression.	A: K1, K2, S1
ICC	Accurate mastery of cultural knowledge; open and inclusive affective attitudes; appropriate and proper behavioral skills.	T1, T2 M: U1, U2, Q1

Table 5 Detailed evaluation criteria for this performance task

Criteria		Content	Quality	ICC
Weight		30%	20%	50%
Score	4	Comprehensively and accurately present the timeline of Chinese characters’ development; accurately assess the significance of their development.	Pronunciation accuracy, lexical and syntactic accuracy/variety, grammatical precision, clear and logical expression.	Accurate mastery of cultural knowledge; open and inclusive affective attitudes; appropriate and proper behavioral skills.
	3	Relatively comprehensively present the timeline of Chinese characters’ development; relatively accurately assess the significance of their development.	Fairly standard pronunciation, fairly accurate/diverse vocabulary and syntax, some grammatical errors, fluent and logical expression.	Relatively accurate mastery of cultural knowledge; relatively open and inclusive affective attitudes; relatively appropriate and proper behavioral skills.
	2	Partially reflect the development timeline of Chinese characters; exhibit biased assessment regarding their developmental significance.	Numerous errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and grammar, poor expressive logic.	Poor mastery of cultural knowledge; perfunctory affective attitudes; inappropriate behavioral skills.
	1	Inaccurately present the development timeline of Chinese characters; demonstrate entirely erroneous assessment of their developmental significance.	Significant errors throughout pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and grammar; disorganized and illogical expression.	Erroneous mastery of cultural knowledge; closed-off and resistant affective attitudes; highly offensive behavioral skills.

4.4.2 Engage and Sustain Attention

The teacher guides students to view textbook images and the title, prompting predictions about the text content. Students then rapidly read the text to verify predictions—effectively stimulating reading interest.

Next, students quickly divide the text into paragraphs (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The teacher implements immediate feedback based on performance to maintain whole-class engagement.

[Design Purpose]

Acquisition of Knowledge & Skill: Learn key milestones and events in Chinese character development; cultivate scanning skills to extract key information.

A-CA: Based on understanding the history of Chinese characters' development, form stronger awareness of Chinese cultural identity.

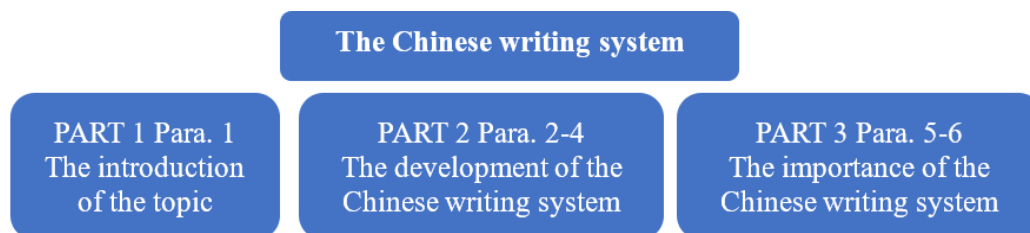


Fig. 2 The structure from students' worksheet

4.4.3 Experiencing, Exploring, Preparing and Enabling

The teacher guides students to organize the timeline and key events of Chinese character development using paragraph main ideas. Students carefully focus on time-related vocabulary to practice scanning skills. Next, they identify corresponding major events by locating temporal markers to complete the fishbone diagram of character development (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This lays the knowledge groundwork for the subsequent performance task—the leaderless group discussion.

(Note: Italicized text indicates content to be completed by students.)

[Design Purpose]

Acquisition of Knowledge & Skill: Deepen understanding of key milestones and events in Chinese character development

K-CCK: Understand the formation and development of Chinese characters

A-CA: Based on understanding the history of Chinese characters' development, form stronger awareness of Chinese cultural identity

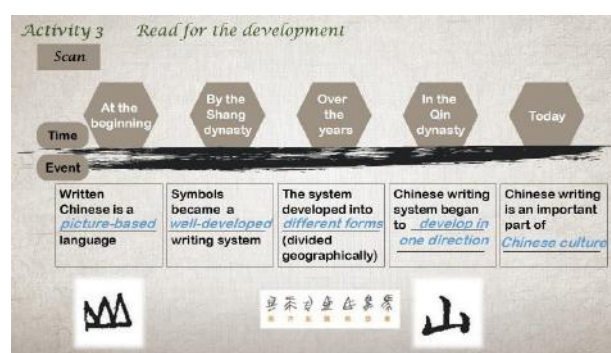


Fig. 3 the fishbone diagram of character development

4.4.4 Reflecting and Adjusting Learning Performance

The teacher guides students to reflect: The purpose of Qin Dynasty's character unification was (eliminating regional barriers to cultural exchange). Students then reconsider whether this is the sole significance of Chinese characters,

transitioning exploration to Part 2—reading about the importance of Chinese characters.

Through scanning and group collaboration, students deeply analyze Chinese characters' significance—the

“Four Connections”—and discuss why these connections matter under teacher guidance.

Students reflect and adjust their thematic understanding and learning performance based on peer and teacher feedback and self-assessment, developing critical thinking—viewing matters dialectically. This establishes knowledge and cognitive foundations for the performance task.

[Design Purpose]

Understand meaning: Characteristics distinguishing Chinese characters from other languages; their significant impact on China and the world. Why connecting ancient/modern and Chinese/foreign aspects through Chinese characters matters.

Transferring: Discover the unique charm of Chinese characters by exploring their relationship with Chinese civilization inheritance, strengthening confidence in native language learning. Enhance national pride.

K-GCK: The Chinese language connecting the world embodies the vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

A-NI: Pay attention to the roles and challenges of Chinese characters in global political/cultural development, promoting Chinese cultural confidence

A-GM: Focus on development dynamics of Chinese characters in today's world, enriching world cultural knowledge

S-IEr: Listen attentively to cultural stories, observe carefully and think actively, forming cognitive understanding of cultures across time and space

4.4.5 Self-Assessment of Gains

The teacher requires students to self-evaluate classroom performance (e.g., completeness/accuracy of oral responses, mastery of lesson content, cultural understanding). Self-assessment helps students review content comprehensively and make holistic self-judgments.

[Design Purpose]

S-IEI: Independently search for/acquire information on cultural phenomena of interest for exploratory learning; basically master ICC principles and certain learning strategies

4.4.6 Tailored Learning

The performance task serves as the Transferring and Creating: activity. Students role-play as experts holding opposing views (unified characters' merits outweighing demerits/demerits outweighing merits) in a leaderless group discussion. They choose positions for polite oral exchanges and report outcomes to the class. The teacher

evaluates using the aforementioned rubric. For homework, students write an argumentative essay reflecting on their in-class performance.

[Design Purpose]

S-ID: Use foreign languages to tell the story of Chinese characters' development

4.4.7 Optimized Instructional Design

This text's activities, aligned with the unit theme and core objectives, implement top-down integration of teaching-learning-assessment, emphasizing cultural knowledge acquisition and cultural awareness development. Students cultivate critical thinking through prior texts and deepen this thinking in new contexts to develop ICC. Activity design follows the English Learning Activity Concept, progressing through layers while conducting multidimensional evaluations to bottom-up assess achievement of lesson objectives.

After class, students complete the AI-designed High School ICC Assessment Questionnaire II, with content and structure similar to Questionnaire I. The teacher then randomly selects students for interviews regarding ICC in foreign language teaching, including questions such as:

- (1) What differences do you perceive between current and previous English classrooms?
- (2) Do you enjoy this type of English class?
- (3) Do you find such English lessons helpful for your learning?
- (4) Do you believe your current ICC has improved? In which specific aspects?
- (5) What factors currently hinder your ICC development?

V. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Findings

Integrating student questionnaires, interviews, and reflective journals, the study reveals—based on the ICC Teaching Reference Framework by scholars Zhang & Wu:

(1) Knowledge: Students thoroughly mastered the formation and evolution of Chinese characters and recognized that the Chinese language connecting the world embodies the vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.

(2) Attitudes: Formed stronger awareness of Chinese cultural identity through understanding character development history; Paid attention to the roles and challenges of Chinese characters in global political/cultural development, promoting Chinese cultural confidence; Focused on development dynamics of Chinese characters in today's world, enriching world cultural knowledge.

(3) Skills: Demonstrated attentive listening to cultural stories, careful observation, and active thinking to form cognitive understanding of cultures across time and space; Used foreign languages to narrate the development of Chinese characters; Independently searched for/acquired information on cultural phenomena of interest for exploratory learning; Basically mastered ICC principles and certain learning strategies.

5.2 Discussion

Applying the ICC Teaching Reference Framework to high school English reading instruction, this research demonstrates its practical operability. Analysis of questionnaires and interviews indicates improvement across all three dimensions of students' ICC, alongside positive reception of the lesson. This confirms the framework's tangible efficacy in developing students' ICC.

However, this study's single-class implementation limits representativeness, necessitating further validation through longitudinal research.

The culturally prominent text selected aligns well with ICC knowledge acquisition, whereas effectiveness with less culturally explicit texts remains unverified.

5.3 Future Research

The ICC Teaching Reference Framework shows strong applicability in high school English education, aligning with students' current capabilities, cognition, and curriculum standards. Future research could:

- Apply the framework to culturally non-explicit texts;
- Extend implementation to other academic levels.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bennett, J. M., & Bennett, M. J. (2004). Developing intercultural sensitivity: An integrative approach to global and domestic diversity. In D. Landis, J. M. Bennett, & M. J. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (pp. 147–165). Sage Publications.
- [2] Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- [3] Dai, X. D. (2018). *Intercultural Competence Research*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [4] Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241–266.
- [5] Ministry of Education of the PRC. (2020). *English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020)*. People's Education Press.
- [6] Ministry of Education of the PRC. (2022). *English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)*. Beijing Normal University Publishing Group.
- [7] People's Education Press. (2019). *Senior High School Textbook: English Compulsory Book 1*. People's Education Press.
- [8] Spitzberg, B. H. (2000). A model of intercultural communication competence. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (9th ed., pp. 347–359). Cengage Learning.
- [9] Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2003). *Understanding by Design* (Y. Jiali, Trans.). China Light Industry Press. (Original work published 1998)
- [10] Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2017). *Understanding by Design (2nd ed.)* (H. Yanbing et al., Trans.). East China Normal University Press. (Original work published 2005)
- [11] Zhang, H. L., & Wu, S. X. (2022). Developing a teaching reference framework for intercultural competence in foreign language education. *Foreign Language World*, (05), 2–11.
- [12] Zhang, H. L., & Yao, C. Y. (2020). Constructing an integrated model for Chinese students' intercultural competence development. *Foreign Language World*, (04), 35–44+53.

APPENDIX: READING PASSAGE

The Chinese Writing System: Connecting the Past and the Present

China is widely known for its ancient civilisation which has continued all the way through into modern times, despite the many ups and downs in its history. There are many reasons why this has been possible, but one of the main factors has been the Chinese writing system.

At the beginning, written Chinese was a picture-based language. It dates back several thousand years to the use of longgu – animal bones and shells on which symbols were carved by ancient Chinese people. Some of the ancient symbols can still be seen in today's hanzi.

By the Shang Dynasty (around 1600–1046 BCE), these symbols had become a well-developed writing system. Over the years, the system developed into different forms, as it was a time when people were divided geographically, leading to many varieties of dialects and

characters. This, however, changed under Emperor Qinshihuang of the Qin Dynasty (221~207 BCE).

Emperor Qinshihuang united the seven major states into one unified country where the Chinese writing system began to develop in one direction. That writing system was of great importance in uniting the Chinese people and culture. Even today, no matter where Chinese people live or what dialect they speak, they can all still communicate in writing.

Written Chinese has also become an important means by which China's present is connected with its past. People in modern times can read the classic works which were written by Chinese in ancient times. The high regard for the Chinese writing system can be seen in the development of Chinese characters as an art form, known as Chinese calligraphy, which has become an important part of Chinese culture.

Today, the Chinese writing system is still an important part of Chinese culture. As China plays a greater role in global affairs, an increasing number of international students are beginning to appreciate China's culture and history through this amazing language.